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ABSTRACT

Attrition of 1978 first-time students at Tidewater Community College and student demographic and attitudinal characteristics were investigated to assist the college in decreasing attrition of new students. Nonreturnees were identified and distinguished from students readmitted to the college during the subsequent five quarters. Information is provided on the following student characteristics: sex, full-time/part-time enrollment status, night versus day enrollment, race, enrollment in curricular versus noncurricular programs, and grade point averages. New students in fall 1978 totaled 5,817 and 2,829 failed to return to the college for at least one quarter. The primary educational goal of students who dropped out permanently and students who returned for at least one quarter (stopouts) was compared. Some evidence indicated that academic success of nonreturnees had very little impact on their decision to reenroll at the college. During the summer of 1979, 421 randomly selected nonreturning students were assessed in terms of goals and reasons for attending college, reasons for not reenrolling, evaluation of services, and suggestions for improvement of services. Responses were obtained from 178 nonreturning students. The primary goals for attending Tidewater Community College were to obtain occupational/technical training to enhance job performance (40 percent), to satisfy specialized or personal interests (33 percent) and to obtain an associate degree or specific courses for transfer purposes (13 percent). (SW)

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THEY DO NOT COME BACK :

LIGHTFIELD REVISITED

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This paper was presented at the Twenty-First Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at the Leamington Hotel in Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 17-20, 1981. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum Papers.

Mary Corcoran
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(Editor, AIR Forum Publications)

Introduction

Traditional review of enrollment data at many colleges and universities has concentrated upon student attrition. Student attrition has been considered a serious enrollment problem because of its impact on funding and long-term facilities and academic plans. Similar to the problems caused by zero or negative enrollment growth, high levels of student attrition are said to contribute to higher education costs per full-time equivalent student (FTES) and additional concurrent difficulties for academic programs and services. Finally, little has been written about the overall impact of student attrition upon the enrollment projection process.

The very mission of community colleges, according to Lightfield (1975), leaves them "ripe" for student attrition. In spite of the much shorter time frame required in order to graduate from a two-year school, attrition rates tend to be higher than at four-year colleges and universities. (Astin, 1972.) However, the "open door" admission policy and the rather liberal "add/drop" policies at some institutions probably contribute heavily to community college attrition rates.

In spite of the veritable plethora of attrition research, most studies tend to be rather narrow in scope and can be divided into three general categories: descriptive or demographic, theoretical and attitudinal studies. The

descriptive studies of retention generally concentrate on identifying those groups of students defined as either "dropouts" or "withdrawals" from the academic institution. These studies tend to concentrate on demographic (student status, sex, etc.) or student ability factors (high school and college grade point averages, aptitude and SAT scores, etc.) as predictors of student attrition. Student ability scores tend to indicate that non-returning students are usually from the lower test score (GeKowski and Schwartz, 1961) and grade percentiles (Bayer, 1971).

Kamens (1971) found that the mission and size of the institution are two important aspects of retention. He posits that larger institutions with a wider purpose, including the number and diversity of professional schools, tend to be more successful in retaining students. Conversely, Lightfield (1975) indicates that the broad mission of community colleges leaves these schools highly susceptible to high attrition rates. Using student tracking techniques, he argues that many of the students at Mercer Community College traditionally viewed as "dropouts" were in fact "stopping out" and returned to the college in subsequent quarters. He also indicates that the rather low attrition rate, 16 per cent, at Mercer Community College was probably too low.

Attitudinal research in the area of student attrition has placed heavy emphasis on the interrelationship of particular student attitudes which lead to dropping out of college. Demos (1968), Chickering and Hannah (1969),

Blanchfield (1971), Rootman (1972), Tinto (1975) and Terezini and Pascarella (1977) have developed various models which include student assimilation and integration within the institution, and the student's commitment to their education as critical variables in predicting institutional and student attrition rates.

Almost all of the studies regarding student attrition conclude that administrative solutions can be implemented for the purpose of enabling certain "high risk" groups to remain in college (Panos et al, 1965; Chickering et al, 1969). The types of services most usually targeted for improvement include: counseling, financial aid and faculty availability (Creamer, 1980).

The purpose of this study is to examine the attrition situation of first-time students at Tidewater Community College, the demographic and attitudinal characteristics of non-returning, first-time or new students, and to assist college administrators and faculty in formulating realistic remedial plans designed to lower student attrition of new students if at all possible. The foci of this study were concentrated within four major areas of interest. First, to identify the actual composition of the total non-returning first-time student population at the college, including examination of student attrition rates by several student status variables. Second, using student enrollment tracking techniques to determine the number of students originally identified as

non-returnees who returned to the college during subsequent quarters. Third, to survey the attitudes of a randomly selected group of non-returning students to ascertain why these students did not return to the college, in order to accurately distinguish between dropouts and students who had fulfilled or completed their educational goals. Four, to determine which institutional changes would enhance the likelihood of future reenrollment by permanent institutional non-returnees (dropouts).

Methodology

The Non-Returning Student Study at Tidewater Community College was divided into several procedural steps in order to accurately determine the actual attrition problem at the college of first-time students. First, non-returnees were identified as students who enrolled for the first-time during Fall Quarter 1978 but did not return the following Winter Quarter (1979). New or first-time students were chosen for analysis because of the fact that the college could follow the success/failure of these students from their initial quarter of enrollment, and gather attitudinal data based on the initial impressions of the new students who failed to reenroll for Winter Quarter 1979. Second, the enrollment patterns of the non-returning population were "tracked" through the use of the Student Information System for the purpose of separating dropouts from students re-admitted to the college during the subsequent five quarters following Winter Quarter 1979. Finally, a 15 per cent random

TABLE 1

NON-RETURNING FIRST-TIME STUDENT POPULATION

	FALL 1978 HEADCOUNT	DID NOT RETURN WINTER 1979		GOAL COMPLETERS/ TRANSFERS		READMITTED IN SUBSEQUENT QUARTERS		TOTAL PERMANENT NON-RETURNEES	
	N	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
MALE	2665	1307	49	419	16	199	7	689	26
FEMALE	3152	1522	48	233	7	305	10	984	31
WHITE	4518	2234	49	499	11	403	9	1332	29
NON-WHITE	1299	595	46	153	12	101	8	341	26
FULL-TIME	1635	332	20	18	1	76	5	238	15
PART-TIME	4185	2497	60	634	15	428	10	1435	34
DAY	3226	1215	38	223	7	238	7	754	23
NIGHT	2591	1614	62	429	17	266	10	919	35
CURRICULAR	2771	1024	37	348	13	244	9	432	16
NON-CURRICULAR	3046	1305	59	304	10	260	9	1241	41
TOTAL	5817	2829	49	652	11	504	9	1673	29

sample of the non-returning population was surveyed for the purpose of ascertaining specific academic goals and plans, employment data, reasons for leaving college and possible inducements for future reenrollment. Attitudinal data were used to divide the non-returning population into two groups; "dropouts" and "goal completers". The attitudes of those students identified as dropouts were carefully analyzed in order to provide information to administrators for formulation of an institution-wide student retention plan.

The Non-Returning First-Time Student Population

During Fall Quarter 1978, 5,817 "new" students were enrolled in credit courses at Tidewater Community College. At the completion of registration for Winter Quarter 1979, 2,829 of the 5,817 first-time students (or 49 percent) who had been enrolled during Fall 1978 failed to reenroll at the college. To gain insight into who these non-returning, first-time students were and why they did not reenroll, a Non-Returning Student Study was conducted by the Office of Institutional Research.

The distribution of all non-returnees by sex indicated that females accounted for 54 percent (males for 46 percent) of the non-returning student population. The proportion of non-returnees by sex was essentially the same between white and non-white students. Analysis of attrition rates by race and sex indicated that the largest attrition percentage occurred among white females (53 percent).

Based on Fall 1978 attendance figures for first-time students, 22 percent of the non-returnees were enrolled full-time and 78 percent part-time. Forty-six percent of all non-returning new students identified in this study were part-time females, compared to only 36 percent of the total first-time student fall quarter enrollment. This represented an attrition rate of 62 percent for Fall Quarter 1978 part-time, new females. Similarly, the attrition percentage of part-time males was also above the college attrition ratio, with 53 percent of this group failing to reenroll for Winter Quarter 1979.

Night students (57 percent) accounted for a majority of the non-returning new student population. Examination of attrition ratios indicated that 62 percent of all new, night students enrolled for Fall Quarter 1978 failed to reenroll the following quarter, compared to only 38 percent of all day students. In addition, 63 percent of the fall quarter part-time, new students attending classes at night failed to return Winter 1979 compared to only 19 percent of all full-time day enrollees.

The distribution of the non-returning population by race was approximately equal to Fall 1978 enrollment data; white students comprised 79 percent of the non-returning population and 78 percent of the fall enrollment. Overall, 49 percent of all white new students enrolled for the fall quarter, compared to 46 percent of the minority new students, failed to reenroll for Winter 1979.

The majority of the non-returning students (64 percent) were enrolled in non-curricular programs for Fall 1978, representing a loss of 59 percent of all non-curricular first-time students. Forty-five percent of these non-curricular non-returnees were enrolled in personal satisfaction courses. The remaining 36 percent of the non-returnees were enrolled in various curricular program areas. Approximately one-fifth of all first-time non-returnees were enrolled in AAS programs, representing a loss of 40 percent of all first-time students enrolled in these programs for the fall quarter. An additional 10 percent of all non-returnees were enrolled in AA/AS transfer programs and represented a loss of 35 percent of the new students in this award area during Fall 1978. Although representing only 5 percent of all non-returnees, approximately one-third of the students enrolled in certificate and diploma programs during Fall 1978 failed to reenroll for Winter 1979. Approximately 69 percent of the non-returnees enrolled in transfer (AA/AS) programs attended part-time during Fall 1978. Forty-eight percent of the part-time and 23 percent of the full-time curricular enrollees failed for reenroll Fall 1978.

Examination of the grade point averages of non-returning new students indicated that 47 percent had fall quarter G.P.A.'s under 1.00; however, 33 percent of the non-returning

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE OF NON-RETURNING FIRST-TIME STUDENTS CLASSIFIED AS STOPOUTS

	N	PERCENT
MALE	199	15.2
FEMALE	305	20.0
WHITE	403	18.0
NON-WHITE	101	17.0
FULL-TIME	76	22.9
PART-TIME	428	17.1
DAY	238	19.6
NIGHT	266	16.5
CURRICULAR	244	23.8
NON-CURRICULAR	260	14.4
TOTAL	504	17.8

population had G.P.A.'s of 3.00 or better. Thus, the non-returning population was composed of a mixed group of successful and unsuccessful first-time students.

Tracking the Non-Returning, New Student Population

One of the most widely stated criticisms directed at descriptive analyses of student attrition relates to the phenomenon of stopping out (March, 1966). This theory is especially prevalent at most community colleges where admissions and registration policies are generally open (Lightfield, 1975). In order to address this valid assumption, after Winter Quarter 1979 the non-returning first-time student population (2,829) was "tracked" (or followed) for five consecutive quarters (through Spring Quarter 1980) to determine the total number of students who had, in fact, returned. Of the 2,829 students identified as non-returnees in this study, only 504 (or 18 percent) returned to the college for at least one quarter. Apparently, the data does not support the theory of widespread stopping out, at least at Tidewater Community College.

Examination of the background characteristics of the stopouts indicates that females, curricular, full-time and day non-returnees were proportionately slightly more likely to reenroll that male, non-curricular, part-time and night students. With the exception of female students, these student status groups generally had lower attrition rates following Fall 1978 and were also considered "lower risk" attrition groups. Analysis of the Fall 1978 grade point

TABLE 3

NON-RETURNING FIRST-TIME STUDENTS'

PRIMARY EDUCATIONAL GOAL

GOAL	DROPOUTS	STOPOUTS	TOTAL
To obtain occupational/ technical training	47 (36.2 %)	25 (52.1 %)	72 (40.4 %)
To obtain occupational/ technical degree/certificate	9 (6.9 %)	7 (14.6 %)	16 (9.0 %)
To obtain an A.A./A.S. - transfer	9 (6.9 %)	3 (6.2 %)	12 (6.7 %)
To obtain specific courses- transfer	11 (8.5 %)	1 (2.1 %)	12 (6.7 %)
To attend to satisfy personal/special interests	49 (37.7 %)	10 (20.8 %)	59 (33.2 %)
Other	2 (1.5 %)	1 (2.1 %)	3 (1.7 %)
NO Response	3 (2.3 %)	1 (2.1 %)	4 (2.2 %)
TOTAL	130 (100.0 %)	48 (100.0 %)	178 (100.0 %)

averages of dropout versus stopout students indicated that dropouts had slightly lower fall quarter grades; however, overall G.P.A. differences were small. Apparently, the academic success of non-returnees had very little impact on their decision to reenroll at the college.

Unlike the overall 16 percent attrition rate at Mercer Community College cited by Lightfield (1975), data from Tidewater Community College indicated a significant attrition problem. The overall attrition rate of first-time students enrolled at the college for the fall term was 40 percent (or 2,325 students). College administrators believed that this was a serious concern which warranted further study.

Non-Returning Student Attitudes

During the late Summer of 1979, a group of 421 students were randomly selected from the non-returning population and surveyed for the purpose of ascertaining goals and reasons for attending, reasons for not reenrolling, evaluation of services and suggestions for improvement of services. One-hundred and seventy-eight completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 42 percent.

The primary goals for attending Tidewater Community College stated most often were to obtain occupational/technical training to enhance job performance (40 percent), to satisfy specialized or personal interests (33 percent) and to obtain an AA/AS or specific courses for transfer purposes (13 percent). Non-returnees tended to cite attending for satisfaction of

TABLE 4

EXTENT TO WHICH STUDENTS FELT THEIR

EDUCATIONAL GOAL HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED

	DROPOUTS	STOPOUTS	TOTAL
To a great extent	24 (18.5 %)	16 (33.3 %)	40 (22.5 %)
To some extent	66 (50.8 %)	18 (37.5 %)	94 (47.2 %)
Uncertain	18 (13.8 %)	9 (18.8 %)	27 (15.2 %)
Hardly at all	9 (6.9 %)	-	9 (5.1 %)
Not at all	7 (5.4 %)	2 (4.2 %)	9 (5.1 %)
No Response	6 (4.6 %)	3 (6.2 %)	9 (5.1 %)
TOTAL	130 (100.0 %)	48 (100.0 %)	178 (100.0 %)

personal or specialized goals (38 percent) than did stopouts (21 percent). Conversely, stopouts were more likely to cite employment and degree oriented occupational/technical goals (67 percent) than permanent non-returnees (43 percent).

Part-time non-returning respondents tended to cite occupational/technical training for employment (44 percent) and satisfying personal or specialized interests (47 percent) as primary goals for attending proportionately more often then full-time respondents (39 and 29 percent, respectively). Similarly, non-returning night respondents also tended to indicate occupational/technical training (50 percent) proportionately more often than day respondents (35 percent); however, night students (34 percent) were slightly less likely than day respondents (40 percent) to cite satisfaction of personal or specialized interests as a primary goal for attending. Female non-returnees were slightly more likely to cite occupational/technical goals (49 percent) and the desire to satisfy specialized or personal interests (46 percent) than male respondents (38 and 26 percent, respectively).

Analysis of student responses to a question regarding actual fulfillment of the student's educational goals indicated that stopouts were somewhat more satisfied than non-returnees. Seventy-one percent of the stopouts indicated that they were pleased with the level of goal attainment achieved at the college, compared to 69 percent of the non-returnees. However, 12 percent of the non-returnees

TABLE 5

PRIMARY REASON FOR ATTENDING THE COLLEGE

OF FIRST-TIME STUDENT NON-RETURNEES

REASON	DROPOUTS	STOPOUTS	TOTAL
Low tuition	12 (9.2 %)	7 (14.6 %)	19 (10.7 %)
Open admissions	5 (3.9 %)	3 (6.2 %)	8 (4.5 %)
Close to home	14 (10.8 %)	6 (12.5 %)	20 (11.2 %)
Good academic reputation	3 (2.3 %)	1 (2.1 %)	4 (2.2 %)
Availability of financial aid	1 (.8 %)	-	1 (.6 %)
Course/curriculum offerings	27 (20.8 %)	13 (27.1 %)	40 (22.5 %)
Availability of evening classes	22 (16.9 %)	4 (8.3 %)	26 (14.6 %)
Personal improvement	25 (19.2 %)	7 (14.6 %)	32 (18.0 %)
To obtain a job	2 (1.5 %)	-	2 (1.1 %)
To obtain better pay or a promotion	10 (7.7 %)	3 (6.2 %)	13 (7.3 %)
Other	3 (2.3 %)	3 (6.2 %)	6 (3.4 %)
No Response	6 (4.6 %)	1 (2.1 %)	7 (3.9 %)
TOTAL	178 (100.0 %)	48 (100.0 %)	178 (100.0 %)

TABLE 6

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF FIRST-TIME

STUDENT NON-RETURNEES - FALL 1978

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	DROPOUTS	STOPOUTS	TOTAL
Active military duty	16 (12.3 %)	4 (8.3 %)	20 (11.2 %)
Employed full-time	68 (52.3 %)	27 (56.2 %)	95 (53.4 %)
Employed part-time	13 (10.0 %)	5 (10.4 %)	18 (10.1 %)
Unemployed - seeking work	5 (3.8 %)	2 (4.2 %)	7 (3.9 %)
Homemaker	15 (11.5 %)	5 (10.4 %)	20 (11.2 %)
Unemployed - not seeking work	6 (4.6 %)	3 (6.3 %)	9 (5.1 %)
No Response	7 (5.4 %)	2 (4.2 %)	9 (5.1 %)
TOTAL	130 (100.0 %)	48 (100.0 %)	178 (100.0 %)

expressed deep dissatisfaction with the level of goal attainment achieved at the college, compared to only 4 percent of the stopouts.

Examination of primary reasons for attending the college indicated that course/curriculum offerings (22.5 percent) personal improvement (18 percent), the college's close proximity to home (11 percent) and low tuition (11 percent) were the most popularly cited reasons for attending the college. Stopouts were more likely than dropouts to cite low tuition and course/curricular offerings; conversely, dropouts tended to cite the availability of evening classes, and personal improvement more often than did stopouts.

Employment data indicated that stopouts were slightly more likely than dropouts to be employed full-time. However, overall employment data revealed very few differences between stopouts and dropouts.

For the purpose of examining important reasons for not returning to the college following Fall 1978, and possible inducements for future reenrollment, only permanent non-returnees (or dropouts) were included in the analysis. After examining various models developed for the purpose of explaining the attrition process, Lightfield's (1975) definition of dropouts was utilized for analytical purposes. Lightfield separates non-returnees into three groups; stopouts, dropouts, and academic goal completers/transfers.

TABLE 6A

PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS CLASSIFIED

AS GOAL COMPLETERS/TRANSFERS

	N	PERCENT
MALE	419	32.1
FEMALE	233	15.3
WHITE	499	22.3
NON-WHITE	153	25.7
FULL-TIME	18	5.4
PART-TIME	634	25.4
DAY	223	18.4
NIGHT	429	26.6
CURRICULAR	348	34.0
NON-CURRICULAR	304	16.8
TOTAL	652	23.0

Utilizing the student information system at the college, the non-returning population from Fall 1978 was tracked for five consecutive quarters to ascertain the number of non-returnees readmitted to the college after Winter 1979. Eighteen percent (N-504) of the total non-returning, first-time student population returned to the college between Spring Quarter 1979 and Spring Quarter 1980 and were identified as stopouts. The extraction of stopouts from the non-returning population reduced the number of non-returnees to 2,325 students or 40 percent of the total Fall 1978 enrollment for the college.

Using data obtained from the non-returning student survey, permanent non-returnees were separated from goal completers or transfers. Approximately 23 percent of the non-returning respondents indicated that they had not reenrolled at the institution because they had completed the course(s) they needed/desired to take, or that they had transferred to another academic institution.[1] Based on these findings, an approximate number of permanent dropouts was calculated for the college of 1,673 students. Using Lightfield's definition of a dropout lowered the college's attrition rate for new students from Fall Quarter 1978 from 49 percent to 29 percent. Non-curricular (41 percent), night (35 percent), part-time (34 percent), and female (31 percent)

[1]Research results tended to substantiate Lightfield's extraction of goal completers/transfers from the overall non-returning population. For example, goal completer/transfer respondents were significantly more likely to indicate general satisfaction with the college and a higher degree of goal attainment (92 percent) than permanent dropouts (62 percent).

TABLE 7

FIRST-TIME STUDENT REASONS

FOR NOT REENROLLING AT THE COLLEGE

	%
DROPOUTS	
SCHEDULING CONFLICTS	42
PERSONAL/FAMILY PROBLEMS	24
DESIRED PROGRAMS/COURSES NOT OFFERED	14
DISSATISFIED WITH INSTRUCTION	14
CHANGE OF RESIDENCE	13
STOPOUTS	
SCHEDULING CONFLICTS	48
PERSONAL/FAMILY REASONS	24
FINANCIAL PROBLEMS	17
DESIRED COURSES NOT AVAILABLE	14
FOUND A JOB	7
PART-TIME DROPOUTS	
SCHEDULING CONFLICTS	42
PERSONAL/FAMILY PROBLEMS	23
DISSATISFACTION WITH INSTRUCTION	14
DESIRED COURSES NOT AVAILABLE	14
CHANGE OF RESIDENCE	12
NIGHT DROPOUTS	
SCHEDULING CONFLICTS	39
PERSONAL/FAMILY PROBLEMS	25
DISSATISFIED WITH INSTRUCTION	16
FINANCIAL PROBLEMS	14
DESIRED COURSES NOT AVAILABLE	12
NON-CURRICULAR	
SCHEDULING CONFLICTS	46
PERSONAL/FAMILY PROBLEMS	25
DISSATISFIED WITH INSTRUCTION	20
FINANCIAL PROBLEMS	11
DESIRED COURSES NOT AVAILABLE	11

first-time students were the most likely to be identified as permanent dropouts; conversely the full-time (15 percent) curricular (16 percent) and day (23 percent) student groups had the lowest attrition rates.

The reasons cited most often for not reenrolling at Tidewater Community College during Winter 1979 included: 1) scheduling conflicts, 42 percent; 2) personal or family reasons, 24 percent; 3) the program/courses desired were not available at the college, 14 percent; and 4) dissatisfaction with instruction at the college, 14 percent. Female dropouts were proportionatly less likely than males to cite scheduling problems; instead, females tended to respond that personal or family reasons (28 percent), financial problems (18 percent), and dissatisfaction with instruction (18 percent) impeded their ability to reenroll.

Part-time dropouts cited scheduling problems (42 percent), personal or family reasons (24 percent) and the unavailability of desired courses or programs as major reasons for not reenrolling. Similarly, night respondents indicated the same leading three reasons as part-time non-returnees for not reenrolling. Non-returning non-curricular students indicated that scheduling difficulties (46 percent), personal/family problems (25 percent), the unavailability of desired courses or programs (11 percent) and dissatisfaction with instruction (20 percent) were the most significant reasons for not reenrolling.

TABLE 8

IMPORTANT FACTORS WHICH WOULD INFLUENCE

NON-RETURNEES TO REENROLL AT THE COLLEGE

	%
DROPOUTS	
More evening classes	33
More courses related to occupation	32
Additional off-campus classes	27
Additional credit for work experience	23
Improved instruction	22
STOPOUTS	
More courses related to occupation	50
More evening classes	43
Additional off-campus classes	33
Additional credit for work experience	33
Improved instruction	33
PART-TIME DROPOUTS	
More evening classes	36
More courses related to occupation	34
Additional off-campus courses	30
Additional credit for work experience	23
Improved instruction	22
NIGHT DROPOUTS	
More evening classes	42
More courses related to occupation	33
Additional off-campus classes	31
Improved instruction	24
Additional credit for work experience	23
NON-CURRICULAR	
More evening classes	37
More courses related to occupation	31
Additional off-campus classes	31
Improved instruction	24
Additional credit for work experience	20

Stopouts were more likely than permanent institutional dropouts to cite scheduling difficulties, financial problems and finding a job as major reasons for not reenrolling than dropouts. Apparently, stopout reenrollment was based on personal impediments rather than institutional deficiencies. Conversely, dropouts were more likely to cite dissatisfaction with instruction and faculty availability--factors which could be changed by the college's administration.

Non-returning respondents were also asked to indicate the relative significance of a list of factors designed to induce them to reenroll in the future. The following factors were cited by dropouts as the most significant potential inducements for future enrollment: 1) more evening classes, 33 percent; 2) more courses related to their occupation, 32 percent; 3) additional off-campus classes, 27 percent; 4) additional academic credit for work experience, 23 percent; and 5) improved instruction, 22 percent.

Although each of the student groups indicated the same two leading factors, more courses related to their occupation and additional evening classes, some differences were found to exist between "high risk" student groups and the other non-returnees. Females, non-curricular and night non-returnees were proportionately more likely to indicate the need for additional off-campus classes; and, non-curricular and night non-returnees indicated the need for improved instruction at the college.

TABLE 9
VARIMAX FACTOR LOADINGS
REASONS FOR LEAVING

VARIABLE	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
FOUND A JOB - NOT REL	.242	-.010	-.098	-.060	-.322	.739*
FOUND A JOB - REL CURR	-.037	.029	-.033	.332	.072	-.206
SCHED. CONFLICTS - WORK	.132	.805*	-.120	.045	.047	-.064
OTHER SCHED. CONFLICTS	.121	-.073	.176	-.110	.571*	-.029
LOSS OF FINANCIAL AID	-.049	-.122	-.044	-.126	-.128	.237
OTHER FINANCIAL PROB.	-.027	-.052	.240	.591*	-.116	.126
TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS	-.023	.296	.016	.750*	.043	-.073
CHANGE OF RESIDENCE	-.084	-.099	-.203	.732*	.046	.004
COURSES NOT OFFERED	.459*	.322	-.028	-.286	.002	-.278
DISSATISFIED W/ INSTR.	.849*	.092	.067	.031	.144	.155
DISSAT. W/ COURSE CONTENT	.858*	-.190	.044	-.037	-.081	-.055
PERSONAL/FAMILY PROBLEMS	-.120	.016	-.076	.103	.288	.650*
CURRICULAR/NON-CURR.	.024	.141	.602*	.109	.072	.164
RACE	.007	-.138	.159	-.066	-.785*	.027
SEX	-.125	-.141	.192	.051	.515*	.392
DAY/NIGHT	.090	-.308	.600*	.120	-.064	-.059
FULL-TIME/PART-TIME	.015	-.025	.674*	.128	.094	-.315
G.P.A.	-.242	.606*	.119	.061	-.081	.077
EIGENVALUE (principal axis)	2.16	1.89	1.66	1.63	1.50	1.28
% VARIANCE	12.0	10.5	9.2	9.1	8.3	7.1
CUM. VARIANCE	12.0	22.5	31.7	40.8	49.1	56.2

FACTOR NAMES:
- I INSTRUCTIONAL DISSATISFACTION
- II HIGH GRADES - SCHEDULING DIFFICULTIES
- III ATTENDANCE - NON-CURRICULAR
- IV FINANCIAL AND TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS
- V PERSONAL SCHEDULING DIFFICULTIES FOR WOMEN AND NON-WHITES
- VI PERSONAL PROBLEMS/FINDING A JOB NOT RELATED TO STUDENT'S CURRICULUM

TABLE 10

VARIMAX FACTOR LOADINGS

IMPORTANT FACTORS TO INFLUENCE REENROLLMENT

VARIABLE	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
ADDITIONAL OFF-CAMPUS CLASS	.131	.694*	.116	.099	.292	.112
ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL AID	.047	.072	.784*	.154	-.022	-.075
MORE OCCUPATIONAL COURSES	.221	.671*	.081	.205	.089	-.051
MORE EVENING CLASSES	.061	.719*	-.076	.267	.281	.124
SATURDAY CLASSES	.207	.651*	-.001	.038	-.048	.236
ADDITIONAL COUNSELING	.154	.056	-.046	.758*	-.077	.260
COURSE CHANGES IN MAJOR	.344	-.019	.162	.229	-.081	-.146
CHILD CARE FACILITIES	.197	.089	.385	.116	.140	-.288
ADDITIONAL CREDIT - WORK	.059	.718*	.012	.054	-.208	-.244
ADDITIONAL PUB. TRANS.	.361	.253	.199	.091	-.316	.597*
IMPROVED INSTRUCTION	.230	.274	-.043	.712*	.085	.013
IMPROVED TRANS. OF CREDITS	.331	.071	.038	.296	-.271	-.149
GREATER INSTRUCTOR AVAIL.	.033	.238	.147	.858 *	-.069	-.048
MORE STUDENT ACTIVITIES	.928*	.196	.020	.120	.002	.014
MORE PARKING FACILITIES	.522*	.191	-.324	.388	.150	.070
MORE RECREATIONAL FACIL.	.913*	.169	.021	.097	.042	.038
CURRICULAR/NON-CURRICULAR	-.070	-.068	-.049	.175	.238	.696*
RACE	.096	-.270	.304	.076	.338	-.220
SEX	-.021	-.107	.004	.138	.028	.080
DAY/NIGHT	-.005	.094	.005	.038	.841*	-.016
FULL-TIME/PART-TIME	.125	.168	-.086	-.221	.557*	.383
GRADE	-.150	.022	.577*	-.332	-.052	.282
EIGENVALUES(PRINICIPAL AXIS)	4.87	2.02	1.62	1.60	1.44	1.35
% VARIANCE	22.2	9.2	7.4	7.3	6.5	6.1
CUMULATIVE VARIANCE	22.2	31.3	38.7	46.0	52.5	58.6

FACTOR NAMES:

I MORE STUDENT ACTIVITIES
II ADMINISTRATIVE/SCHEDULING CHANGES
III HIGHER GRADES - FINANCIAL AID
IV IMPROVED INSTRUCTIONAL AND COUNSELING SERVICES
V STUDENT ATTENDANCE
VI PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FOR NON-CURRICULAR STUDENTS

Although the responses of stopouts are ranked in approximately the same order as the response of permanent institutional dropouts, stopouts were quite vocal about the need for various administrative and faculty changes. However, in spite of the higher level of stopout disapproval of college services, these students returned to the college.

Factor analyses of permanent institutional non-returnees' reasons for not reenrolling at the college and potential changes which would influence future reenrollment both yeilded six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. Table 9 indicates that three of the six factors concerning respondent reasons for not reenrolling were attitudinal factors. These factors were given tentative titles based on attitude clusters. These factors were tentatively identified as: I - Instructional Dissatisfaction; II - Scheduling Conflicts of High G.P.A. Students; III - Student Attendance; IV - Finance/Transportation Problems; V - Scheduling Problems for Non-Whites/Females; and VI - Finding a Job/Personal Problems. However, the stated reasons for not reenrolling at the college from fall-to-winter were less related to student demographic or status/attendance variables; instead, these responses were linked to other similarly relevant reasons. Only two of the six factors associated a reason for dropping out with demographic variables - scheduling conflicts encountered by students with higher grades and personal scheduling difficulties for non-whites and females.

Similarly, factor analysis of the responses to potential institutional changes which would influence future reenrollment indicated the importance of attitudinal factors. Student background factors, in both cases, do not include high factor load scores for response variables. In fact, the two factors related to future reenrollment responses with the largest eigenvalues were labeled, I - requests for additional student activities and II - administrative/ scheduling changes. Non-curricular students were linked to responses calling for additional transportation services, while students with Fall Quarter 1978 G.P.A.'s of 2.00 or better were associated with requests for additional financial aid. However, readers should be hesitant to draw any firm conclusions based on the evidence presented in the factor analyses.

In conclusion, analyses of these two questions, non-returning reasons for leaving Tidewater Community College and inducements for future enrollment, indicate that, in both cases, reenrollment responses were related to other general attitudes. Conversely, the same reenrollment responses were less related to non-returning student background characteristics. In fact, examination of response differences between "high risk" attrition groups and other "lower risk" non-returning student groups indicated that very few signficant and important differences existed. Rather, the non-returning students' expressed attitudes appear to indicate more about the process of student attrition.

Research findings at Tidewater Community College indicate that even after stopouts and goal completers/transfers are extracted from the non-returning population, the college still had a significant attrition problem. Apparently, certain attitudes and demographic characteristics are tied to the attrition process. Although every student cannot be retained, and it is not desirable to retain every student, the college developed an administrative council to discuss the attrition problem at the college. Scheduling flexibility, improving instruction, encouraging students to enter specific areas of study, improving counseling services, and integrating students into a non-residential academic institution were identified as potential areas of academic change. However, as the data indicate, administrative change is not the panacea for reducing attrition, rather, the community college mission and "open-door" policy contribute rather heavily to high attrition rates. It remains the task of college administrators and faculty alike to realize the three different aspects of student attrition and assess the impact each has on college enrollment. Stopping out and goal completion or transferring do not reflect on institutional performance, rather it should cause enrollment projections to reflect the rather short-term and intermittant educational plans of many community college students.

SG/ml

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